

# Introduction

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INTRODUCTION The following entry presents criticism of Orwell's short novel *Animal Farm*, which was published in 1945. *Animal Farm* (1945) is considered one of Orwell's most popular and enduring works. Utilizing the form of the animal fable, the short novel chronicles the story of a group of barnyard animals that revolt against their human masters in an attempt to create a utopian state. On a larger scale, commentators widely view *Animal Farm* as an allegory for the rise and decline of socialism in the Soviet Union and the emergence of the totalitarian regime of Joseph Stalin. Critics regard the story as an insightful and relevant exploration of human nature as well as political systems and social behavior. After its translation into Russian, it was banned by Stalin's government in all Soviet-ruled areas.

Major Themes Critics note that like many classical animal fables, *Animal Farm* is an allegory—in this case, of the Russian Revolution and the rise of Stalin's tyrannical government. It is generally accepted that Orwell constructed his story to reflect this purpose: Manor Farm represents Russia; Mr. Jones is the tsar; the pigs represent the Bolsheviks, the bureaucratic power elite; Snowball is Leon Trotsky, who lost a power struggle with Stalin; Napoleon is Stalin; and Napoleon's dogs are Stalin's secret police, known as the GPU. The corruption of absolute power is a major theme in *Animal Farm*. As most of the animals hope to create a utopian system based on the equality of all animals, the pigs—through greed and ruthlessness—manipulate and intimidate the other animals into subservience. Critics note that Orwell was underlining a basic tenet of human nature: some will always exist who are more ambitious, ruthless, and willing to grab power than the rest of society and some within society will be willing to give up power for security and

structure. In that sense *Animal Farm* is regarded as a cautionary tale, warning readers of the pitfalls of revolution. Critical Reception *Animal Farm* is regarded as a successful blend of political satire and animal fable. Completed in 1944, the book remained unpublished for more than a year because British publishing firms declined to offend the country's Soviet allies. Finally the small leftist firm of Secker & Warburg printed it, and the short novel became a critical and popular triumph. It has been translated into many languages but was banned by Soviet authorities throughout the Soviet-controlled regions of the world because of its political content. As a result of the book's resounding commercial success, Orwell was freed from financial worries for the first time in his life. A few years after its publication, it attracted critical controversy because of its popularity amongst anticommunist factions in the United States; Orwell was alarmed that these forces were using his short novel as propaganda for their political views. In the subsequent years, *Animal Farm* has been interpreted from feminist, Marxist, political, and psychological perspectives, and it is perceived as an important and relevant book in the post-World War II literary canon. Moreover, it is considered one of Orwell's most lasting achievements.